SPECIAL
COLLECTIONS
DOUGLAS
LIBRARY

QUEEN'S UNIVERSITY
AT KINGSTON

KINGSTON ONTARIO CANADA

A

NARRATIVE

OF THE

PROCEEDINGS

OF THE

Proteſtant Diſſenters

Of the Three DENOMINATIONS;

Relating to the REPEALS of the

Corporation and *Teſt Acts*,

From the YEAR 1731, to the preſent Time.

Addreſſed to the DISSENTERS.

LONDON:

Printed for J. ROBERTS, near the *Oxford-Arms* in *Warwick-Lane*. MDCCXXXIV.

[Price Six-Pence.]

AC911.1734.N37

A NARRATIVE *of the Proceedings of the* PROTESTANT DISSENTERS.

Gentlemen,

ABOUT the Opening of the Seſſion of Parliament in 1731, there appeared among the Proteſtant Diſſenters, in ſeveral Parts of the Kingdom, a very deep Senſe of the Unreaſonableneſs of the Sacramental Teſt and Corporation Acts, as they occaſioned a Proſtitution of a ſacred Rite of our holy Religion, were Reſtraints upon the Conſciences of many Diſſenters, and a Mark of Infamy upon them all, and a grievous Burden on all the parochial Clergy: As they were founded upon perſecuting Principles, had occaſioned two other ſevere Laws againſt the Diſſenters in the Reign of Queen *Anne*; *viz.* the Occaſional Conformity and Schiſm Acts; and had a natural Tendency to introduce other Laws of the ſame kind.

Upon this View the Proteſtant Diſſenters prepared Petitions, in ſeveral Parts, to the H——of C——for the Repeal of thoſe two Acts, ſo far as they related to themſelves, and wrote Letters to their Friends in *London*, communicating their Deſign, and deſiring the Concurrence and joint Influence of the Diſſenters in this City.

Some of the *London* Miniſters, who have thought fit to take the Lead for ſome Years paſt, and from their diſtributing the Fund-Money, and other large Sums, have great Weight and Influence over our Affairs, deſired that thoſe Petitions might be

laid aſide till the next Seſſion of Parliament. They acknowledged, indeed, that they were the Proofs of a laudable Zeal in the Petitioners, but alledged, however, that they were ill-timed, the Diſſenters not having concerted their Meaſures for backing their Petitions; and the Petitions themſelves being like to be ill received by the Miniſters, becauſe they deſigned but a ſhort Seſſion. But they added, that if their Brethren in the Country would agree to lay aſide their Petitions for the preſent, they would prepare Pamphlets, and concert Meaſures ſo fully againſt the enſuing Seſſion of Parliament, as that the Petitions ſhould have the whole Force of the Diſſenters united to ſupport them; and they gave the ſtrongeſt and moſt poſitive Aſſurances, that if this Requeſt of theirs was complied with, they would preſs the Repeals with all their Might, tho' all the M——rs ſhould be againſt them.

Here a Regard to Union among their ſelves, a Confidence in the Veracity of thoſe who promis'd it, with a Complaiſance to the M——rs, againſt what was thought to be right and reaſonable, laid the Foundation of their firſt Diſappointment.

During the Receſs from Parliament, theſe Diſſenting Miniſters, with ſome other Gentlemen, made Application to a great Man, who told them, that the Thing was juſt and fit in itſelf, and was due to them, and would be more for the Service of the Government than of the Diſſenters themſelves: But that they had conſider'd the Liſt of the Members, and tho' they could carry the Repeals deſired, yet it would be with as much Difficulty, and by as ſmall a Majority, as they had ever carried any Government Queſtion; and that it would raiſe the Cry of the Church, and prejudice ſome of the Whigs in their approaching Elections.

Theſe

Theſe Diſſenting Miniſters, who are your L^ds Al^mens, as I have already hinted, finding that thoſe Repeals were not agreeable to the M^rs^ters, inſtead of entring into Concert with their Friends and Brethren in the Country, or writing in behalf of the Repeals, and giving the Attempt of them the Force of the whole Body united, (tho' their Promiſe was engaged, and had been unhappily truſted) avoided their moſt intimate Friends whom they thought to be zealous for thoſe Repeals, and uſed all manner of Arts with the utmoſt Induſtry in private Converſations and Correſpondencies, to damp and extinguiſh the Zeal that there was for them, and even to cry up the Danger and Hazard that there was to Civil Liberty itſelf and the Toleration, in attempting them.

The Menaces of a great P^rſ^te to call on all the Diſſenting Miniſters to ſubſcribe the Articles, were not forgotten to be trumpeted about, and ſuch Terrors were induſtriouſly ſcatter'd abroad, as appear'd likely to frighten the Weak-hearted from the Attempt. B. of London

Thus did theſe Miniſters endeavour to prevent all Attempts for theſe Repeals; and at the yearly Meeting of the *London* Miniſters, *Oct.* 3. 1732, tho' they came into a Vote *that the Civil Affairs relating to the general Intereſt ſhould be referr'd to Gentlemen*, yet they ſeemed to be fearful leſt it ſhould come into their Hands, and to be deſirous of preventing it. For many thinking that ſuch a general Vote would be of little Service effectually to tranſmit the Management of our Civil Affairs into the Hands of Gentlemen, made theſe two following Motions beſides, *viz. That it ſhould be reſolved adviſable, that a conſiderable Number of Gentlemen might meet to conſider what Steps were fit to be taken with relation to the Repeals of the Corporation and Teſt Acts the enſuing Seſſion of Parliament:*

ment: And *that ſome particular Gentlemen might be then named, of whom they ſhould deſire this.* And it was not without great Oppoſition that the former of theſe could be carried; and the latter was ſuperſeded and ſet aſide with this Anſwer, *That the Deſign would execute itſelf without any Nomination at all.*

Thoſe Miniſters who moved to have the Conduct of the Civil Intereſts removed into the Hands of Gentlemen, and ſome of thoſe who concurred with the Motion, probably did it becauſe they apprehended that the Gentlemen would manage them more to Advantage than thoſe who had hitherto had them in their Hands. But many did it, in all probability, in order to get rid of a troubleſome Buſineſs, which would bring Difficulties upon them which way ſoever they turned themſelves, and either diſoblige their Congregations by oppoſing the Repeals, or thoſe whoſe Benevolence they received, if they ſhould encourage and promote them. This ſeemed to be the generous Spring of their Conduct in getting this Buſineſs off their own Hands, but they did not take the leaſt Care to put Gentlemen in Poſſeſſion of their Affairs, by ordering theſe Reſolutions of theirs ſo much as to be communicated to them, or by any other Method whatſoever.

A little after this a worthy Miniſter or two did voluntarily addreſs themſelves to two or three Gentlemen, (not as from the Body, or in conſideration of their Reſolutions, but purely of themſelves) and deſir'd them to take the Affair of the Repeals under their Conſideration, and ſee what they could do for them. Thoſe two or three Gentlemen got a few others together, in all nineteen; and, except two or three of them, they all appear'd to be for ſolliciting the Repeals that next Seſſion.

This

This private Meeting of nineteen Gentlemen happening ſoon after the general Meeting of Diſſenting Miniſters, ſome have induſtriouſly endeavoured to connect them, and graft the Proceedings of the Gentlemen upon the Votes of the Miniſters; by this means thinking to prove that the Extent of the Matter of the Truſt repoſed in the Gentlemen of the Committee is to be meaſured by *the Vote of the Body of Miniſters*, which it is ſaid * *was conceived in Expreſſions of as full Meaning as (in) a later Recommendation of a new Choice of Deputies.*

But here it is obvious that the firſt general Vote of the Miniſters is the only thing had in View, and the Remarker ſeems ignorant that there was any other Vote paſſed in that Aſſembly, whereas there was another more particular Reſolution come to by the Body, which he had full as much Reaſon to refer to as the former. But I would obſerve that thoſe Reſolutions of the Miniſters have neither of them any Connection with the ſubſequent Proceedings either of the Meeting of nineteen Gentlemen, or of the Generality, or of the Committee; nor were they either of them ever laid before any of their Meetings, or made or treated by them as the Ground-work of their Proceedings; nor, as far as I can find, were they ever referr'd to in the whole Courſe of this Affair, as regarded in ſuch a Light; but the Affair of the Repeals was the ſingle Matter to which the Views, Debates, and Tranſactions of the Diſſenters were all this while confined, and that independently and irreſpectively to any Reſolutions which were taken by the Miniſters.

Before this Meeting of nineteen Gentlemen, many Diſſenters in ſeveral Counties met together, and came

* Remarks on the Letter to the Deputies, and the Right of the Committee, &c. p. 4.

came to a Reſolution of the ſame kind as had been expreſſed there; and others a little after it. All of them had the ſame Tendency, though ſome were more full and vigorous than others. The Places which came to this Reſolution were *Dorſetſhire*, Part of *Somerſetſhire*, *Wilts*, *Berks*, *Bucks*, *Eſſex*, ſeveral Parts of *Yorkſhire*, *Hertfordſhire*, *Briſtol*, *Liverpool*, &c. And others were ready, but waited to ſee what Reception this Affair would meet with at *London*.

The Meeting of nineteen Gentlemen agreed to call the Diſſenters in *London* together in a promiſcuous and voluntary Meeting in *Silver-ſtreet*, *Nov.* 19. 1732.

Great Pains were taken to have this Meeting fill'd with Gentlemen of the B—k and other Companies, Governors, Directors, Clerks, and other inferior Officers, with other known Dependants on Perſons in Power: And a certain Miniſter in *London* will remember, whether he was not pleas'd to acquaint a Lady of his Congregation, that he had ſpent two Hours every Afternoon for a Fortnight before that Meeting, to conſider who were proper Perſons to get to that Meeting, and what were the likelieſt Methods to get them there.

It is alſo well known that Letters were wrote to thoſe Diſſenters to be there who were againſt ſolliciting the Repeals, as appear'd by the Declaration of ſome of them at that Meeting; and that no Meaſures at all were taken to get thoſe there who were for it. Thoſe who were thought to be againſt ſolliciting them were preſſed to be there early, and to fill the Body of the Place, which they accordingly did. The Seat juſt under the Chairman's was reſerved for thoſe who were deſigned by the Leaders of the Meeting to be choſen of a Committee, if they ſhould find themſelves obliged to proceed ſo far; and ſuch remo-

ter

ter Seats as thoſe who were againſt the Repeals could not fill, were left for ſuch of thoſe who were for them as might happen to be there.

By this means thoſe who were for dropping the Repeals made a much greater Shew and Appearance at that Meeting than they could have done from their bare Numbers, and had all the Advantages which any Party Arts, which were pretty freely uſed, could give them.

Mr. *H—n* appear'd at this Meeting, who had never appear'd at any either publick or private Meetings of the Diſſenters called to conſult about the Management of their Civil Affairs before, and had refuſed to come to ſome to which he had been invited by ſome of the chief Diſſenters. It muſt therefore be ſuppoſed that *ſome more powerful Application than from any Diſſenters* engaged him to be preſent at this Meeting of Diſſenters, which was the moſt publick that till that time had ever been known.

Some of this Meeting called on Mr. *Ab—y*, a Gentleman of the long Robe, to take the Chair, but he was not preſent. Several of thoſe who had filled the Body of the Place, called on Mr. *H—n* to take it, who, without any Queſtion or Vote for that purpoſe, took the Chair immediately, as knowing himſelf intended for it; and having prepared a Speech to open this Meeting with, he pointed out to them the Affair of the Repeals, as the ſole View to which he would have them direct their Proceedings.

It was evident that the Perſons, intended by thoſe who were for dropping the Repeals, to be the Leaders of this Meeting, were deſirous to prevent this Meeting from doing any thing at all but adjourning, and that for ſo long a time, as that every body might ſee, not only that nothing

was intended to be done, but that the very Poſſibility of doing any thing about the Repeals, was taken away: And it is believed by ſome, and not without Reaſon, that the Affair of the Repeals was agreed to be dropp'd in a private Meeting of ſome managing Perſons before this Meeting of the Generality in *Silver-Street*, *Nov.* 19. Agreeably to which Deſign, ſome there called out for an Adjournment of Six Months, ſome for one of Three Months: But they being reproached with evidently having no other End in view, but to make that Meeting act the mere Farce of pretending to do Buſineſs, while they did not intend to do any, they were at length forced to yeild to appoint a Committee of Twenty-one Gentlemen, *To conſider when, and in what manner to apply for the Repeals of the Corporation and Teſt Acts, and to report their Opinion to the next Meeting.*

The Gentlemen at that Meeting, named Perſons for this Committee in the ſame manner as is practiſed in the H—e of C—ns, but the Chairman took down their Names in ſuch Order as he ſaw fit, and put them up to the Vote as he ſaw fit, and put them affirmatively only, and not negatively; and declared Eighteen of the Perſons nominated at once, on whom, as he ſaid, the Majority of Hands fell; and then put up ſeveral others again, out of which he declared Three more, which compleated the Number of which it had been reſolved the Committee ſhould conſiſt.

This was a very ſtrange manner of declaring a Choice, and put the Nomination of this Committee entirely into Mr. *H—n*'s Hands. The only way to have kept it in the Aſſemblies, was to have put the Queſtion on every Perſon nominated, affirmatively and negatively, as all other Queſti-

ons are put, and ſo to have ſeen whether more were for or againſt him.

No body in the Aſſembly oppoſed this Method, for no body knew what Method they were taking, or what they were doing, but a few about the Chair, among whom Things paſſed in a kind of Whiſper. Many of the Aſſembly did not think that the Chairman's Declarations were exact, which cannot indeed be wonder'd at, how much ſoever he might be determin'd to do fairly, conſidering the Difficulties he was under, from its being a numerous Aſſembly, held by Candle-light, from thoſe who wiſh'd well to the Repeals being at a Diſtance from him, and thoſe who were for diſcountenancing the Attempt being, as it were, all round about him.

He at length declared the following Gentlemen to be the Perſons who were choſen; *Thomas Abney* Eſq; Dr. *Avery*, Mr. *George Baker*, *John Bance* Eſq; Lord Viſcount *Barrington*, Mr. *James Bradley*, *Stamp Brooksbank* Eſq; Mr. *Richard Coope*, *Nathaniel Garland* Eſq; *Nathaniel Gould* Eſq; Mr. *Peter Hind*, *Samuel Holden* Eſq; Mr. *John Holliſter*, *Matthew Howard* Eſq; *John Jacobs* Eſq; Mr. *Samuel Leſſingham*, Mr. *Benjamin Mee*, Mr. *Joſeph Pace* Jun. Mr. *James Ruck*, Mr. *William Snell*, Mr. *Francis Wilks*.

The Committee being thus choſen, Mr. *H—n* was juſt going to put the Queſtion of Adjournment, which had put an End to all further Proceedings, had not one of the Meeting, who is well known to have diſtinguiſhed himſelf all along for the Repeals, mov'd, That they would order the Committee immediately to withdraw and adjourn themſelves, or that elſe it was impoſſible for the Committee ever to meet: That being moved, was

order'd, and the Generality adjourned to *Nov.* 29. to meet at the ſame Hour and Place.

After this Committee was choſen, thoſe Diſſenting Miniſters, who being the Elder Men, have the greateſt Power in diſtributing the Fund-Money, and who, with ſuch as they pleaſe to aſſociate with themſelves, are the ſole Diſtributors of *thoſe other large Sums, which, at firſt being made publick, were generally look'd on as the Price of our Liberty*, gave all their Influence up to the Majority of this Committee, and diſtributed their Money, and propagated ſuch Sentiments in Clubs, Families, private Converſations and Correſpondences, as might beſt ſubſerve the Views of that Majority of this Committee, and particularly ſet themſelves every where to talk againſt one of the Committee, whom they thought to be one of the chief in the Oppoſition to the Meaſures they were taking, tho' they ſcarce knew how to ſpeak with reſpect enough of him but a little before.

The Committee was adjourned to the Day Mr. *H—n* ſignified that he could conveniently meet them on his Return from his Country Houſe, where he let them know he always ſtay'd from *Friday* till *Tueſday*.

The firſt Day the Committee met, Mr. *H—n*, *without any Vote*, took the Chair, tho' it ſeems to be contrary to all Order, and to the Courſe of Buſineſs, that the *Chairman of a Body* ſhould at the ſame time be the *Chairman of a Committee* of that Body.

A Secretary too, the ſecond Officer of the Committee, who was a Clerk of Mr. *J—bs*, tho' no Member of the Committee, took his Place at the Bottom of the Table, without any Vote of the Committee, or any Perſon's ſo much as telling the

the Committee who he was, tho' he was payed by a Contribution of every Gentleman of the Committee.

It ſeemed to be the Senſe of a Majority of that Committee, that in order to make their Report, they ſhould go to ſome Perſons of great Power and Influence, to ask their Advice when, and in what manner, to apply for a Repeal of the Corporation and Teſt Acts; but a worthy Member of the Committee, who is ſince dead, moved that they might lay a Memorial before His Majeſty, ſetting forth the great and grievous Hardſhips the Diſſenters lay under from theſe Laws, with the Prejudice they were of to His Majeſty's Government, and humbly beſeech His Majeſty to take this Matter into His Royal Conſideration, as the common Father of all His dutiful Subjects. In this he was ſeconded by another of the Committee, but that Motion was rejected, tho' poſſibly it may, by many, be thought to be the wiſeſt Meaſure they could have taken.

After this Motion for laying a Memorial before His Majeſty was rejected, the Perſon who had ſeconded it, ſaid, That ſince that Motion could not be made agreeable to the Committee, he thought they ought to go to the firſt M——r not for Advice, which was ſaying they were not determined in their own Minds, was putting themſelves in the Power of him whoſe Advice they aſked, and if he was underſtood not to be for the Repeals for that Time, was indeed begging a Denial: But that he was for going to the firſt M—r as much as any of them, to let him know that the Diſſenters hoped to obtain this Piece of Juſtice, to acquaint him with the Grounds and Reaſons of their Pretenſions to it, and to aſſure him that they would make all ſuitable Returns, in the moſt dutiful

tiful and affectionate Zeal for the Government, and the moſt vigorous Support of all the Friends of Liberty at the enſuing Elections: And farther alſo to acquaint him, that if from any Difficulty that had not appeared to them in their conſidering this Matter, it would be inconvenient to grant them the Repeal of theſe Acts this Seſſion of Parliament, they were ready to accept proper Securities for their obtaining them afterwards.—He farther let them know, that not any thing that had ever been obtained for the Diſſenters from the Year 1703, to the Year 1722, (the only Time in which they had ever received any Favours) had been obtained by aſking Advice, but by acquainting the M—rs with the reaſonable Expectations of the Diſſenters, and aſſuring them of all ſuch Returns to the Government, as could poſſibly be wiſhed for from the moſt dutiful Subjects.

This ſtruck the whole Committee at that Time, ſeveral of thoſe Perſons who afterwards appeared the moſt zealous againſt making any Attempts to obtain theſe Repeals, gave this Member of the Committee great Thanks, and made him great Compliments for ſetting this Matter in ſo good a Light, both from Reaſon and Hiſtory, and declared they were for going to the great Man in the ſame manner.

The firſt M—r was then in *Norfolk*, and was not expected back for ſome time, that Time therefore was whiled away in the Committee: When he returned to Town, the Chairman acquainted the Committee, that he would let him know that ſome Gentlemen of the Committee deſired to wait upon him, tho' it had been ſaid in the Committee, without being contradicted, that it was hoped the whole Committee might wait upon him.

The

The Chairman reported that this Houourable Perſon would ſee five or ſix of the Gentlemen ſuch a Night, The Chairman was asked who thoſe five or ſix were to meet there, whether any beſides the great Man himſelf, He ſaid eight or nine of the M—rs, It was then ſaid, let nine or ten of the Committee go, But that was overruled, and no more than ſix were to go, and they to be ballotted for. But it was ſaid by a Gentleman, that the Chairman ought to go in his own Right, without being ballotted for: Such Prerogatives had the Chair in every Caſe. And by a concerted Ballot five Gentlemen were choſen by pretty even Numbers, three of thoſe who were for an Attempt to obtain the Repeals, and two of thoſe who were againſt it. But the Member of the Committee who had received ſuch Thanks and Compliments for his great Knowledge and Experience in the Affairs of the Diſſenters, and his great and eminent Services to them, was not one of the Number. It was moſt evidently concerted and ſtipulated that he ſhould not be one, and three were to be taken of thoſe who were for the Attempt, provided it was but agreed that he ſhould be left out.

The ſix who went up to meet the M—rs were *Samuel Holden*, Eſq; without being ballotted for, Dr. *Avery*, *John Bance*, Eſq; Mr. *Bradley*; which three had the moſt Votes on the Ballot; *Nathaniel Gould*, Eſq; and *Stamp Brooksbank*, Eſq; Theſe ſix did not agree in their Report to the Committee of what had paſs'd in that Converſation. Some ſaid the M—rs were for the Repeals, others ſaid that they were againſt them, but moſt agreed that the then Lord Ch—r ſpoke ſtrongly for the Repeals, as things that were moſt highly reaſonable and practicable, and that there were

but

but one or two of the great Men who ſpoke againſt them, and that moſt of them had been ſilen.

Upon this the Committee reſolved to report, *That if an Application ſhould be made at this Time, it was not likely to be attended with Succeſs.* Two of the Committee, Lord *Barrington* and Mr. *Bradley*, were againſt this Report, the Truth of it not appearing ſufficiently evident, and not being a proper Report on the Matter referr'd. All the reſt of the Committee agreed to it.

At the ſecond Meeting in *Silver-ſtreet*, *Nov.* 29. which was by far the greateſt that had ever been held by the Diſſenters, and conſiſted, as it was thought, of ten or twelve hundred, Mr. *H—n* took the Chair again, *not only without any Vote, but without any body ſo much as calling on him to do it*; and according to his manner immediately open'd this Meeting with a Speech to prepare the Minds of the People met, to agree more readily to the Report that was to be made to them.

After Mr. *H—n* had deliver'd his Speech and made the Report, a Gentleman ſtood up and ſaid that he thought this was not a Report proper to the Matter that had been referr'd to the Committee, which was *to conſider when and in what manner to apply for the Repeals of the Corporation and Teſt Acts.* The Chairman, contrary to the known Duty of the Chair and the Freedom of Debate in all Aſſemblies, reprimanded him with great Severity and Heat, as being highly irregular in expreſſing his Diſlike to a Report of the Committee, tho' he was a Gentleman to whom the Chairman was greatly and publickly obliged for ſupporting him in the ſharp Conteſts he had had in a certain Company.

This

This Sentiment of this Gentleman however prov'd to be the Sentiment of the Aſſembly, and this Report was diſagreed to and recommitted by a Majority of about three Fourths or four Fifths of that Meeting.

Upon this the Gentlemen of the Committee who were againſt making any Attempt for the Repeals all roſe up one after another, and expreſſed ſo great a Diſſatisfaction with the Aſſembly, as to decline doing them any further Service in the Committee. And moſt of thoſe who were for attempting them, diſcouraged with the little Likelihood they ſaw of Succeſs, from a want of Harmony and Unanimity in the Committee, did alſo deſire to be excuſed any further Service. But the Gentlemen who were for quaſhing the Attempt, and had declined any further Service in the Committee, when they ſaw a new Committee naming, leſt they ſhould loſe their Power and give it up to others, did all offer to reſume their Seats, *if the Aſſembly would conſent to add no more than four new ones to them, and charge them with no freſh Matter.*

How modeſt this was in the Committee to preſume to make Terms with the Aſſembly, and how vaſtly condeſcending it was in the Aſſembly to yield to it, let the World judge. The Aſſembly however candidly accepted of thoſe Gentlemens Offer, and confined themſelves to the Addition the Committee had preſcribed them of four more Gentlemen, and choſe Mr. *John Bedwell*, *Benjamin Burroughs*, Eſq; Mr. *Thomas Hollis*, *Edward Leeds*, Eſq; and then they gave it as an Inſtruction to this their new Committee, *to make their Report to two Deputies choſen out of every Congregation in* London *and ten Miles round.* This Addition was made and theſe Gentlemen

choſen, becauſe when the Aſſembly was nominating Perſons for a new Committee, it was obſerv'd that none of the Baptiſt Denomination were in the former, and deſir'd that ſome of them might be in the new one.

This new Committee met on *Friday*, *Dec.* 1. and came to the following Reſolutions:

That a Letter be written to the Secretary of the Diſſenting Miniſters of the three Denominations, encloſing the Reſolution of the Meeting in Silver-ſtreet, Nov. 29. *deſiring the ſaid Miniſters to communicate it to their reſpective Congregations, in order to their chuſing two Perſons according to the ſaid Reſolution, and to return a Liſt of the Perſons ſo choſen to the Chairman, to be atteſted by the Miniſter of each Congregation, or other proper Perſons where there is a Vacancy.*

That a Letter be written by the Chairman conformable to the ſaid Reſolution.

The Chairman accordingly ſent a Letter, encloſing the Reſolution of the Generality, *Nov.* 9. and thoſe other Reſolutions of the Committee, to the ſaid Secretary, who laid it before the Committee of Miniſters of the three Denominations, which was ſummon'd by three of their own Number, and had an extraordinary Meeting upon this Occaſion *Dec.* 5. when it was agreed to comply with the Deſire of the *Committee of Gentlemen*, and that their Secretary ſhould ſend a Letter giving notice of this to all the Miniſters of the three Denominations.

Upon this the Deputies were choſen, and on the 28th of *December* they met by Summons of Mr. *H—n* at *Salters-Hall*, and were going to chuſe *a Chairman of their own*, as in all *Right* and *Reaſon* and according to all *Order* they ought to have done, in order to have received the Report from Mr.

Mr. *H—n the Chairman of the Committee.* But Mr. *H—n* being inform'd of this, broke up the Committee abruptly, who had an Hour's Buſineſs which they had reſolved to do, *without any Vote to that purpoſe*, declaring he would go up and take *the Chair of the Meeting*, and that if the Aſſembly of Deputies would not admit him as *their Chairman*, and *them as a Committee* to vote *as Deputies* (though they were not Deputies) he would make no Report to them at all, but leave the Aſſembly, and deſire all others who were of his Mind to follow him down Stairs, and to form another Meeting below. With ſo calm and gentle a Hand did Mr. *H—n* all along carry it as Chairman, and ſo perfect a Conſiſtency is there in all the Parts of his Conduct, when it comes to be narrowly look'd into, with thoſe Speeches of his recommending Peace and Unity, which he has ſo often and ſo ſolemnly made to our Aſſemblies from the Chair.

As ſoon as he came up among the Deputies, he went and took *their Chair*, ſtill *without any Vote* for his ſo doing, and both he and the Committee inſiſted on a Vote's paſſing, that the Committee had a Right to vote among the Deputies, tho' it was clearly ſhewn that the Deputies could not give them ſuch a Right, nor could they receive it. And though the Committee were intreated by a noble Lord, who was one of the Committee and a Deputy too, not to inſiſt on the Vote, but let it paſs *ſub ſilentio*, in which he would acquieſce, (though he neither could nor would give his Vote for their having a Right to ſit as Deputies and vote as ſuch) yet it could not be obtain'd, but was ſtill inſiſted on that it ſhould be voted to be their Right: Tho' a Gentleman of the Committee, well known for his Zeal in theſe high Meaſures, had in effect given

it up, by appealing from the *Right* and *Juſtice* of this Point, to the *Equity* and *Candor* of the Deputies themſelves.

When the Majority of the Deputies had in a Hurry and Surprize given up that Point to the reſolute and unchangeable Demands of the Committee, the Report was made, *That an Application to Parliament the enſuing Seſſion, for a Repeal or Explanation of the Corporation and Teſt Acts, is not likely to be attended with Succeſs: That upon this Conſideration ſuch an Application is by no means adviſable.*

No body ſpoke againſt this Report but the noble Lord before mention'd, and when he ſaw that it was agreed to, he ſpoke for the Deputies adjourning for a ſhort time, that they might have an Opportunity to conſider further of what was before them. The Committee in general ſpoke againſt this, and none of the Deputies ſpeaking for it, they were adjourn'd *ſine die*, and after ſtaying this firſt time together an Hour or two, were never call'd together, nor ever met again, during the Courſe of that Year.

The Committee after this had a Meeting, and wrote ſome Letters to *Briſtol*, *Exon*, and *Liverpool*, to acquaint them what the Deputies had done, and to deſire the Diſſenters in thoſe Parts to concur with them therein; and when they had read and ſettled their Minutes, and raiſed Money among themſelves to pay the Secretary and defray the other incident Charges, (tho' they would not ſuffer any Gentleman of the Committee to have a Copy of their Minutes even at his own Expence) they declar'd they had nothing more to do, but to drink a Bottle with the Overplus Money. This was on *Jan.* 3. 1732. Letters were return'd in Anſwer to thoſe from the ſeveral Places to which they

they were wrote, but they were carefully ſecreted, and not ſo much as communicated to the Committee itſelf, tho' they were directed to them. Muſt not ſuch Men * *be of a very ſingular Make indeed*, after ſuch Conduct as this to think that the Committee and Deputies were like *to part with mutual Satisfaction, and without any Jealouſies and Diſcontents?*

October 16, 1733, the yearly Meeting of the Proteſtant Diſſenting Miniſters of the three Denominations was held, and it being recommended to them by their Committee, to enquire, *Whether it was not adviſeable to have a new Choice of Deputies for the enſuing Year*, it met with great and violent Oppoſition from the Al—rs and their Adherents; but after a long Debate, the Body came to this Reſolution, *That it is the Opinion of this Meeting, that it be recommended by the Miniſters of the three Denominations to their reſpective Congregations, to chuſe two Deputies for the Year enſuing, for the Management of the Civil Affairs relating to the Proteſtant Diſſenters.* Upon a Diviſion there appeared to be 36 for it, and 16 againſt it.

One of the *Minority*, in the Courſe of the Debate (how agreeably to the Nature and Rules of a Debate, every one may judge) did declare, *That if it was carried by ever ſo great a Majority, he would pay no Regard to it*; and after it was voted, another of them declared, *That they would have no Deputies.*

Mr. *Denham* as Chairman of the Body, and Mr. *Chandler* the Secretary, wrote to the Miniſters of the ſeveral Congregations to acquaint them with this Reſolution; and there having been no Order made by the Meeting of Miniſters, to whom the Deputies, when choſen, ſhould be return'd, they did not write to their Brethren to whom they ſhould make

* *Vide* Mr. *H—n*'s Speech at *Salters-Hall, Feb.* 6. 1733.

make the Returns, tho' it ſeems moſt reaſonable they ſhould have been made to Mr. *Denham* as Chairman of the Body, by whom the Reſolution of the Body had been ſignified to them. And ſuch a ſmall Defect in Rule and Order, if it muſt be ſo called, one would think ſhould not have been an Obſtacle and Objection to their doing it, who were of the Minority, ſince, as far as appears, they have, in the whole of their own *ſeparate* and *clandeſtine* Proceedings, diſcarded all Regard to any thing that can be called ſo.

For ſome time it was the Deſign of the *Minority* of Miniſters to evade the *Reſolution* of the *Body*, and entirely ſet aſide the Choice of Deputies, according to thoſe Declarations which ſome of them had made, both while it was debating, and after it was carried, at the annual Meeting; and Methods were taken for this Purpoſe, in hopes they ſhould prevent the *Operation* of the Vote, tho' they were not able to prevent the *carrying* it: An evident Argument this ſeems to be, how cloſe a Connexion there is at this preſent Time between the *Choice of Deputies*, and the *Intereſt of the Diſſenters*, that even the *elder* and the *artful* Miniſters were not able to beat down the general Senſe of it, with the ſuperadded Weight and Influence of their *Money*, and that Load of Contempt they endeavoured to lay on their Brethren who oppoſed them.

But, however, tho' they could not ſucceed in this Enterprize, they reſolved not to deſiſt from endeavouring to free us from the *dangerous Hands of a free Repreſentative*; and therefore, at a Meeting of ſome of the *Minority* of Miniſters in Conjunction with ſome others who were not at the general Meeting, they came to a Reſolution, *That the old Committee choſen laſt Year*, (whom, in Reaſon,

fon, one would expect never to hear of more) *was yet ſubſiſting, and that they would return the Deputies their Congregations ſhould chuſe, to Mr.* H——n *the Chairman of it.* A Reſolution this, that appeared ſtrange, not only for the Reaſon already hinted, but alſo becauſe, in the annual Meeting of the whole Body of Miniſters, it was openly and generally aſſerted, *that we had no ſubſiſting Committee or Repreſentative of any ſort*, that this was the very *Ground* of the *Reſolution*, and the very *Senſe* of it, and no one Miniſter appeared at that Time to think the contrary, which yet was a proper Time, and afforded many proper Occaſions of aſſerting it if they had.

In conſequence of this Reſolution taken by theſe Miniſters, a Letter was ſent encloſing it to Mr. *H—n*, ſigned by almoſt all the Independent Brethren, and other Letters were wrote to ſuch Miniſters of Congregations in the Country, as the Al—rs had an Influence over (and after what has been ſaid in this Narrative already, it is not to be wondred if many ſuch there were) to return their Deputies when choſen to Mr. *H—n*, with an Injunction, *to add this particular Clauſe, that they would be ready to attend the Summons of the Gentlemen of the Committee.*

Various were the Dealings of Mr. *H—n* and thoſe Miniſters and Members of the Committee who acted with him, to get the *Right* and *Power* of ſummoning the Deputies, *acknowledged* to be in him, but, as it was to the laſt inſiſted on, that he ſhould be allowed to *ſummon as Chairman of the Committee in their Right*, all Offers of that kind were *rejected*, ſince thoſe who oppos'd it were firm in their Judgments that no ſuch *Right* could be, and no ſuch *Power* ought to be in him, and were Perſons of that Integrity and Reſolution

of Mind, that ſo long as they thought ſo, would not have acknowledged it for the World.

In the mean while, ſeveral of the Deputies who were choſen for this Year, had Meetings to conſult about a proper Method of convening the Body, and after mature Conſideration, thirty-five of them ſummoned the whole Number, as far as by great Diligence and Enquiry they could get the knowledge of them, to meet on *Monday, Jan.* 28, at *Pinner's-Hall*, at nine of the Clock; and there a *Majority* of the Deputies met, and it was intended to chuſe a Chairman, and proceed *regularly*, and it was hoped *unanimouſly*, to conſider of the *Truſt* that was lodged in their Hands, and the beſt Means of *faithfully* and *effectually* diſcharging it.

But here another violent Effort was made in behalf of the Committee, and a great Poſſe came in Concert to diſtreſs the Meeting, and deſtroy the Deſign of it, becauſe not ſummoned under the Authority of the Committee, and to inſiſt on *no Chairman but Mr.* H—n, *no Buſineſs without the Committee.* And this was accordingly inſiſted on, but with what Decency and Manners, as well as Juſtice and Equity, I ſhall not take upon me to ſay, tho' it was done by Perſons who, one would think, ſhould not be unacquainted with either; they will themſelves, I believe, remember it with Shame, and be obliged to any who will be ſo kind as to conceal it: They were heard with great Patience and Decency all that they had to ſay for a conſiderable while, but no ſooner did a Gentleman on the other Side begin to reply to what had been ſpoken, but they made ſuch a Tumult and Noiſe in the Aſſembly, and inſulted him in ſuch a manner, as made it impoſſible for him to go on.

However,

However, they not finding, or not imagining the Aſſembly diſpoſed to give their Sanction to ſuch prepoſterous Claims, the whole Party withdrew, as ſome others, who were differently diſpoſed, had done before, who, from the Noiſe and Tumult they obſerved in the Aſſembly, judged that for that time at leaſt, no Buſineſs could be done: But many of thoſe who came with diſintereſted and peaceable Intentions to ſeek the Service of their common Liberty, remained in the Place, to the Number of above ſixty, and with great Calmneſs, when theſe Diſturbers were gone, proceeded to the Choice of a Chairman, and regularly adjourned themſelves, without proceeding to do any other Buſineſs; hoping that by time ſuch Animoſities would ſubſide, and that they might meet together afterwards with more reaſonable Sentiments, and behave there with greater Decency and Temper.

That this Aſſembly ought to be eſteemed the Body of Deputies, and their Reſolutions look'd upon as the Acts of the Body, will appear, if we conſider that this was a Meeting of Deputies *upon a regular and undiſputed Summons, ſent to the whole Body*, it being ſent by 35 of their own Number, and this is a Rule in all Bodies, *that whatever Number meets at the Time and Place appointed by a regular Summons*, is always look'd on as the Body met, and to have at leaſt the Right and Power of Adjournment in them, and ſummoning afreſh: and this was actually the Caſe here: for tho' a perfect Liſt could not be got of all the Deputies of the Congregations, they not being all returned to one Perſon, nor perhaps all choſen, yet two of the Summons were included in a Letter to the Miniſter of every Congregation whoſe Deputies were not choſen, or not known to

the Summoners, ſo that this was a *Meeting of Deputies upon a regular Summons ſent to every individual Member of the Body*, and conſequently is to be look'd upon as the Body met, and if not having all the Powers of the Body reſiding in them, yet at leaſt thoſe which they then exerciſed.

Moreover, it is allowed that here was actually preſent a Majority of the Deputies, and tho' many went away before a Chairman was choſen, and they had put themſelves into Form, yet being met upon a general Summons, and going away before any Vote of Adjournment (the common Method in which all Bodies break up) their departing could not invalidate the Proceedings of thoſe who remained.

At this Meeting Captain *James Winter* was choſen Chairman, and it was then reſolved, *That this Meeting be adjourned to this Day Fortnight, being* Monday *the* 11*th Day of* February *next, at nine of the Clock in the Morning at this Place, and that the Deputies be ſummoned accordingly.*

But in this Interval of Adjournment, Mr. *H—n* ſummoned the Members of the Committee to meet again *Jan.* 31. at *Salter's-Hall*, who had never met ſince *Jan.* 3. of the Year before, and gave them but one Day's Notice of ſuch an unexpected Meeting, by which Reaſon ſeveral, either thro' Abſence or Buſineſs, were prevented from being there: it is true he ſummoned them at the Requeſt of nine of the Deputies, who ſent a Letter to him for that Purpoſe, ſigned with their Names; but it may juſtly be queried, Whether the Motion for ſuch a Letter did not take its firſt Riſe from Mr. *H—n* himſelf, and the ſmall Number of the Committee that acted with him.

It

It ſeemed ſtrange to many Perſons, that Mr. *H—n* and his Friends ſhould take ſuch a Step as this, ſince if they had looked on themſelves as a ſubſiſting Committee, which were ſtill entruſted with the Management of the Civil Affairs of the Diſſenters, by virtue of the Inſtructions they had received of their Conſtituents, it was altogether inexcuſable, and indeed unaccountable, that they had never met in all that time before, eſpecially conſidering that the Affair of the *Iriſh* Repeals was all this while depending, which was an Affair of Importance to the *Engliſh* as well as *Iriſh* Diſſenters, it having been *promiſed as a Pledge of the ſame Favour intended for ourſelves:* But how that has been managed, and how equal to the Task of treating with great Men, Mr. *H—n* and his Adherents in the Committee are, the Event manifeſtly ſhows; they having truſted in Appearances which deceived no body but themſelves, and not all of them neither, and having helped to draw all the Diſſenters of *Ireland* into a *ſhameful Diſappointment.*

Upon that Occaſion I cannot forbear applying an Obſervation of a Perſon much converſant with C—ts and M—rs, and well verſed in their Characters and Arts: * *That thoſe Perſons who are naturally weak at Court, can never hinder themſelves from believing every thing that it is willing to be at the Pains to make them believe. I have obſerv'd it a thouſand and a thouſand times, and that whenever they are not made Dupes, it is wholly owing to the Fault of the Miniſter.*

* Que les gens qui ſont naturellement foibles à la Cour, ne peuvent jamais s'empêcher de croire tout ce qu'elle prend la peine de leur vouloir faire croire. Je l'ai obſervé mille & mille fois, & que quand ils ne ſont pas Duppes, ce n'eſt que la faute du Miniſtre. *Retz Mem.* Vol. I. p. 166. *Ea. Amſt.*

Jan. 31. Mr. *H—n* and the Committee met at *Salters-Hall*, and there appear'd only ſeventeen out of the twenty-four ſurviving Members of it, and four of thoſe came there only to make their Proteſt againſt the Right which the Committee claimed without any Foundation, of ſtill continuing and acting as ſuch: Firſt of all Dr. *Avery*, next to him the Lord Viſcount *Barrington*, afterwards Mr. *Bedwell*, and then *Edward Leeds*, Eſq; They were not all preſent at a time, but they all declared and inſiſted that they had finiſhed the Truſt that was committed to their Care, and could not conſiſtently with the Rights of the Diſſenters, nor the Regard they owed to the Honour of their own Characters, continue to act as Members of a Committee whoſe Buſineſs was finiſhed, and the Time they were limited to for performing it expired, which to all the World muſt appear to be thruſting themſelves into an Office, and which the whole Body of Diſſenters might juſtly interpret to be an Invaſion of their Rights; and having fully and largely argued the Abſurdity of their Attempt, they all abſolutely refuſed to act with them. They ſaid they would ſtay and conſult with them willingly, if they would do it in their *private Character* only, but upon their being told that they were there *as a Committee*, they withdrew from the Meeting, tho' they were earneſtly intreated to ſtay.

There were three more who expreſſed themſelves diſſatisfied about the Continuance of the Committee, and refuſed to be concerned in any Act of theirs as ſuch, tho' they determin'd to ſtay, that they might have the Satisfaction of hearing what might be ſaid to juſtify their Continuance, as well as what had been argued againſt it: But it ſhould ſeem that they went away as much

much if not more diſſatisfied of their Right than they had come thither, becauſe after hearing all that could be ſaid to that purpoſe, they refuſed to concur with them, and would not vote on any of their Queſtions. One of them, as I am inform'd, moved it to the Meeting, that if the Deputies were to be ſummon'd, it might be to meet at the Time and Place that the Body at *Pinners-Hall* had adjourned to, but no ſuch Motion could go down with the Committee: And indeed it affords very juſt Ground to ſuſpect that Mr. *H—n* and thoſe who adhered to him muſt have *ſome Point to carry*, and ſomewhat that they were *vehemently ſet upon*, that contrary to the *Tenor of their Truſt*, contrary to the *Sentiments ſo freely declared in the Body of Miniſters at their annual Meeting*, contrary to the *Sentiments of moſt of the Diſſenters in general*, and to ſo *conſiderable a Number of the Committee*, they would ſtill puſh their Pretenſions to a Right of continuing and acting in that Capacity; but this was of a piece with the reſt of their Conduct, they having always acted as the moſt *determined Perſons* in the whole Courſe of this Affair.

There were ten only who voted for the Queſtion that was moved at that Aſſembly, which was *for ſummoning the Body of Deputies*, and yet in the Summons which was iſſued to convene them this is called the *unanimous Deſire of the Committee*, but how far it could be called a *unanimous* Deſire, or a Deſire of a *Majority*, the World will judge from the foregoing Facts: However, in conſequence of this Meeting of the Committee, the Deputies were ſummoned to meet on *Wedneſday*, *Febr.* 8. at *Salters-Hall*, and ſummoned under the *ſole Authority of the Committee*, tho' the Body had already regularly met at *Pinners-Hall* on *Jan.* 28.

and

and had adjourned themſelves to the ſame Place on *Monday* the 11th of *February*.

Every one may ſee what thoſe Gentlemen who met Mr. *Holden* and his Adherents of the Committee did there in their printed Reſolutions, Mr. *H—n* made a fourth Speech at that time to the Aſſembly, concerning which the Publick has long ſince been enabled to form a Judgment: And it was not a little ſurprizing to many, to ſee, beſides other things that are there, ſuch a Repreſentation of Mr. *Dodrige*'s Caſe, as not only made a Matter of *Favour*, of a thing which is only a *Point of Law*, which the Diſſenters have never been denied even when the Times ran higheſt againſt them, but alſo carried in it an Inſinuation againſt the Judges themſelves, as *needing the Influence* of *Men* in *Power* to do *Acts* of *common Juſtice* and *Law* to their Fellow-Subjects; there are alſo in this Speech ſuch Pretences to Intereſt and Favour with Gentlemen in Power, as it was thought ill-judged to drop ſo cloſe upon the Heels of the *Iriſh* Diſappointment. This was thought to be very injudicious, and to ſhew that the Committee had as little Skill to conduct their Power, as they had Right to poſſeſs it.

The Deputies who met there thanked the Committee for their paſt Services, *reſolved that the Committee doth ſubſiſt*, *i. e.* reſolved a Matter of Fact to be different from what it was, *and be deſired to continue a Year longer*, as their Committee, though they can't be their Committee ſince they are not Deputies, nor were they the Body of Deputies who deſired this of them, but a private Party Meeting only: They *reſolved that Deputies ſhould be choſen a Year hence*, *and returned to Mr.* H—n, *and that a Committee may be choſen either out of themſelves or others*; by which laſt Reſolution there evidently

evidently appears to be a Deſign formed, and a Foundation laid for chuſing either *the ſame or ſome ſuch like Committee* the next Year as was choſen the laſt.

There was one thing more done at this Meeting, and that is, the Letter the Committee wrote laſt Year to *Briſtol*, and *Liverpool*, and *Exon* was then read to the Deputies, but becauſe they did not think fit to read the Letters they received in return, I have ſubjoined the Copy of one of them, the only one I could procure, to this Narrative: And the Reaſons I dare ſay will ariſe in full View to every Reader from that Letter itſelf, why the Gentlemen of the Committee did not think fit to communicate it to the Deputies, tho' I doubt whether they will be thought to redound to the Honour of thoſe who ſuppreſſed it, it having plainly the Appearance of *Partiality and Unfairneſs*, to pretend to lay their Conduct before the Deputies, when they deſignedly concealed from them that which it moſt concerned them and was of moſt Importance to the common Intereſt for them to know; it is ſubmitted whether this was any better than *mocking* and *impoſing* on them.

Feb. 11, the Deputies met at *Pinner's-Hall* according to their regular Adjournment, and beſides other Buſineſs, for which I refer to their printed Minutes, the Aſſembly came to theſe following Reſolutions: *That a Committee be choſen out of their own Body, That the Number of ſuch Committee be* 15, and *That they be choſen by Ballot on* Wedneſday February 20, *at* 9 *of the Clock in the Morning at this Place*, and *That if any Liſt ſhould contain the Names of any ſuch as are not Deputies, it ſhould be void*; and then the Aſſembly adjourned to *Wedneſday* the 20th of *February*, at 9 of the Clock in the Morning.

Feb.

Feb. 20, the Deputies met purſuant to their Adjournment, and after taking the Ballot, it was reſolved, *That this Committee be called a Committee of Enquiry and Propoſals*, and *That after being declared, they ſhould withdraw and adjourn themſelves to ſome proper Time and Place:* And then the Perſons appointed to examine the Ballot, reported, that the Majority was fallen on Dr. *Benjamin Avery*, the Lord Viſcount *Barrington*, *Henry Bendiſh* Eſq; Mr. *John Bedwell*, *John Cay* Eſq; *John Copeland* Eſq; Mr. *Joſiah Chitty*, *Robert Ferguſon* Eſq; Mr. *John Hollis*, Mr. *Joſeph Jordan*, Deputy *William Pomeroy*, *Richard Ricards* Eſq; Mr. *John Reynolds*, Mr. *William Robinſon*, *William Tempeſt* Eſq;

It may be proper here to obſerve, that it had long been the Opinion of many of the Diſſenters, that if a Deputation could be procured all over the Kingdom, and a Correſpondence ſettled thro'-out the whole Body, it would tend greatly to unite, ſtrengthen, and revive their Intereſt, which for want of this, among other Cauſes, had fallen into Decay, and run almoſt to ruin: This had been thought of and wiſh'd for by many of the preſent (and, if my Information is right, had once been concerted, but unhappily prevented and obviated in the laſt) Generation, who are the heartieſt Friends to the Intereſt of the Diſſenters; and at the ſecond Meeting of the Generality in *Silver-Street*, when it was reſolved that the Committee ſhould make their Report to Deputies choſen by the Congregations of Diſſenters within 10 Miles of *London*, it was moved and preſſed by a Member of the Committee, *That they might report to Deputies from the more diſtant Parts of the Kingdom, as well as from* London *and the Parts adjacent*, but that Motion was oppoſed and over-ruled by ſeveral of the Committee.

Some

Some of the Deputies thought it adviſeable, and determined to propoſe this Matter afreſh at this Meeting, as a thing which they not only thought would cement the Body into a firm Union, and make their Conſultations concerning their common Intereſt of more Weight and Efficacy, but which our preſent Circumſtances ſeemed to afford a moſt likely and promiſing Opportunity of obtaining: —And accordingly, after it had been opened to the Aſſembly, and debated for ſome time, the Aſſembly came to the following Reſolutions in relation thereunto; Reſolved, *That the Miniſters of the Congregations of the Proteſtant Diſſenters of the three Denominations in ſuch Cities which are Counties, and in one City, Port, or chief Town of every County in* England *and* Wales, *and Town of* Berwick *upon* Tweed, *be writ to, to deſire them to recommend it to all the Contributors of their reſpective Congregations, to chuſe Deputies for ſuch City, Port, or Town, as ſoon as may be, and in ſuch manner as they think moſt expedient, to join the Deputies at their next Meeting at* Pinner's-Hall, *to manage the Civil Affairs of the Proteſtant Diſſenters; and that the ſaid Miniſters be deſired to return the Names of ſuch Deputies as ſhall be choſen, to Captain* James Winter *the Chairman, the next Poſt after the Election.*

Reſolved, *That it be an Inſtruction to the Committee, to write ſuch Letters, and that they be ſigned by the Chairman of the Deputies.* It was alſo

Ordered, *That the Committee do draw up a State of the Diſſenting Intereſt, and lay it before the Deputies at their next Meeting.*—And after this the Aſſembly adjourned to *Wedneſday* the third of *April* next, at nine of the Clock in the Morning.

The Committee having withdrawn according to the Reſolution of the Body, adjourned themſelves to the next Day, *Thurſday* 21. But a few

only being preſent, they adjourned themſelves again to *Friday* 22. ——— And then they took into their Conſideration the Inſtruction of the Body about inviting Deputies from the Country, and agreed to the Form of a Letter to be wrote to the Miniſters of the Congregations of ſuch Places as the Reſolution of the Body ſpecifies.

In the mean time, on *Friday*, *March* 1, the Deputies received a Summons ſigned by *William Hodgkin*, to meet on *Wedneſday*, *March* 6, at *Salters-Hall*, without mentioning by whoſe Order or Direction he had ſent it, it was expected by many that this Meeting was deſigned for the making of ſome Overtures of Peace and Union, eſpecially ſince ſome Perſons who were extremely deſirous of it, had ſignified their Wiſhes and Hopes to this Effect, to ſome of the Committee, with their Readineſs to come into any Meaſures that ſhould be thought to conſiſt with the Honour of both Sides, and to tend to the Proſperity of the whole Body; And it was likewiſe thought, that if Mr. *H—n* really was as deſirous of Peace as he ſeemed to be in his late Speech at *Salter's-Hall*, he would do his Endeavour to inſpire ſuch Sentiments in the reſt of the Committee, as ſhould diſpoſe them to receive, if not firſt to offer Meaſures for Union, eſpecially conſidering that they had been the ſole Authors of our Diviſions; but ſo far was the Diſpoſition of the Committee from leaning at all this way, that tho' ſome Perſons who went there with that View, did move that they would appoint ſome of their Number to meet and confer with ſome of the Deputies, who had met at *Pinner's-Hall* for that End and Purpoſe, yet this met with ſuch a Reception, as ſhew'd Mr. *H—n* to mean nothing by Peace but entire Subjection to him

him and the Committee, and that no other Councils were agreeable to their Views, than such as tended to *settle them in absolute Power over the Dissenters, and the arbitrary Government and Disposal of their Affairs.*

At this Meeting, *Samuel Holden* Esq; in the Chair, after the printed Minutes of the Body of Deputies which had met at *Pinner's-Hall* on the 28th of *January*, and the 11th and 20th of *February* last, had been read, and the fore-mentioned Motion for Peace and Union had been disdainfully rejected, they came to the following Resolutions.

Resolved, *That the Meeting of a small Number of Deputies in a separate Body under the Name of the Deputies of the several Congregations of Protestant Dissenters of the three Denominations in and within ten Miles of* London, *in Opposition to a great Majority of the whole Body of Deputies, tends to divide and weaken the Interest of the Dissenters.*

Resolved, *That it be recommended to the Dissenters in the Country, at the ensuing Elections for Members of Parliament, to promote the Interest of such Persons as are known to be well affected to his Majesty's Person and Government, and to the Civil and Religious Liberties of our Country.*

Resolved, *That these Resolutions be communicated to the Dissenters in the Country, in such manner as the Committee shall think fit.*

March 8, Mr. *H——n* sent a Letter into the Country, as from the Committee, along with these Resolutions. After complaining of the Conduct of some *Gentlemen*, from which *unhappy Divisions have arisen, who not being contented to move in the Circle they were chosen for, have by the Resolutions they have come to, taken the most effectual Means to spread the Division throughout the whole Kingdom*; (in

which Words, tho' intended for other Perſons, they have moſt exactly deliver'd their own Character) they have added the following Paragraph, which is worthy a Remark.

We ſhall not (ſay they) *enter into a particular Detail of the ſeveral Steps which have been taken to prevent Matters coming to this Extremity, or aggravate the Proceedings of the Gentlemen in the Oppoſition, but leave it to you and the World to judge what Views they have, and what Conſequences muſt neceſſarily follow from ſo unnatural a Diviſion.*

Would not every one be ready to imagine from this Paragraph, that theſe Gentlemen had made many Overtures of Peace and Propoſals of Union, and taken Meaſures for procuring Harmony and Unanimity among the Diſſenters, and had unhappily fail'd of it thro' the *Perverſeneſs of their Opponents?* And that the Gentlemen who have oppoſed them, are acted merely by a *Spirit of Oppoſition* and *latent Views*, which are incompatible with the *publick Intereſt of the Body of Diſſenters?* Should not theſe Gentlemen let the Perſons they appeal to, have ſome Facts to ſupport theſe Suggeſtions, or elſe, in honour, give over making them? But the truth is, thoſe Gentlemen's Strength does not lie in a *Detail of Facts* (which is prudently avoided by them) but in *general Inſinuations only, unſupported by any Facts*, by which they endeavour to faſten the preſent Diſtreſs and Diviſion of our Intereſt, upon Perſons who neither by *Principle*, by *Intereſt*, or by their *paſt Conduct*, are in the leaſt open to any ſuch Suſpicions.

Theſe Gentlemen have indeed made many Motions to *eſtabliſh themſelves and their Power as a Committee*, and have, it muſt be own'd, been very *deſirous of a Harmony and Unanimity amongſt the Diſſenters in owning their Right, and ſubmitting themſelves*

ſelves entirely to their Government and Direction: but as for Motions for Peace and Union among us *in any other Reſpect*, they have been ſo far from *ſetting on foot*, *encouraging*, or *ſhowing any Regard* to them, that they have *conſtantly rejected them*; for which I appeal to thoſe made at the Meetings at *Salter's-Hall*, *January* 31, and *March* 6, beſides others in a more private way, ſo far were theſe Gentlemen from having any Views to Peace or Union, unleſs in ſubmitting to them, that, if my Information is right, it was with great Difficulty that they were brought to admit of the Queſtion for a Choice of a new Committee next Year; for tho' the firſt Motion was that the Choice might be made out of *Deputies only*, they could not be perſuaded to it without taking away the Limitation of it to *Deputies*, and putting it Deputies *or others*.

Thus I have endeavour'd to give a fair Narrative of the Conduct of the Diſſenters in this important Affair for theſe three Years paſt, in which Time it has been agitated.

And on reading this ſhort Narrative every one may ſee that this Committee have all along ruled all the Meetings both of the Generality and the Deputies in *Silver-ſtreet* and at *Salters-Hall*, with the concurring Help of our L—d A—rs, and that by joining in a ſtrict Union together they had gone a great way towards enſlaving the Body of Diſſenters, firſt to themſelves, and afterwards to whomſoever they pleaſed.

By this it will appear, that the Oppoſition which has been carried on againſt them has not ariſen, as they have freely but falſly and maliciouſly aſſerted, from a Deſign to diſturb the Meaſures of the M——y, but purely from a Senſe of that Slavery and Deſtruction which was ſeen to be preparing by their tyrannick Meaſures, for us and our Intereſt, and a Deſire of preventing it.

By

By this it will appear, that this Committee and our Al—rs are of all Men moſt unfit to manage our Civil Affairs for us, not only as they have already *groſly miſconducted*, not to ſay *betrayed* them, but as they lie under ſuch Obligations to thoſe with whom they treat about the Recovery of our Rights, as will render the Deſire of them more weak from their Mouths than any others whatſoever.

By this it will appear, that not the Civil Affairs at large of the Diſſenters, but that of the Repeals alone, is what has been had in all this time under Conſideration, by the Meeting of Nineteen, and by the ſeveral Meetings of the Generality, and that that Affair alone was committed to the Care both of the firſt and ſecond Committee choſen by them at *Silver-ſtreet*; and that in all the Truſts which have been repoſed in them, they have ever been limited by their Principals both as to Matter and Time.

By this it will appear, that the Money our Miniſters receive from thoſe who they own *never grant their Favours without their Views*, has been a great Means of diſconcerting our Meaſures in the Purſuit of the Repeals, and of diſappointing our Hopes of obtaining them: And that we can never be ſafe in our Liberties and Intereſts, while we remain ſubject to the Influence of that *which has already bought almoſt all the Liberties of Mankind*, and while we are governed by thoſe *who generally ſpeaking have been the Inſtruments of ſelling them.*

By this it will be ſeen, on whomſoever it may have been laid, who are the Perſons who have indeed divided us, and that they have made ſuch a Diviſion abſolutely neceſſary and unavoidable, ſince it was not in our Power to ſee our deareſt Liberty wounded, and lying as it were in its laſt Agonies, without uſing our earneſt and utmoſt Endeavours for its Preſervation and Safety. By

By this it will appear, how dangerous it is to ſubmit to the Power that the Chairman and the Committee aſſume, and how neceſſary to oppoſe it, in order to prevent the Growth of their daily Uſurpations and Encroachments on the Liberties of the ſeveral Congregations of Diſſenters of the three Denominations, and the Deputies who repreſent them: For if our Affairs muſt be eſtabliſhed in the Courſe that theſe Gentlemen have hitherto put them, we may bid adieu to our Liberty for ever, and this and all ſucceeding Generations will have Reaſon to look upon theſe very Perſons, our *pretended Friends*, as born for the utter Deſtruction of our Cauſe, which the *open Enemies* of it had never been able to effect.

And finally by this Narrative it will appear, that the Body of Deputies has been regularly aſſembled and regularly formed at *Pinners-Hall*, at which Place they have hitherto met, and were laſt adjourned to *Wedneſday* the 3d of *April* next, at 9 of the Clock in the Morning, whither it is hoped the Wiſdom of the Deputies, and their Care of the Civil Affairs of the Diſſenters committed to them for this Year, will incline them generally to reſort: As they are all as hearty and undoubted Friends to his Majeſty's Royal Perſon and Government, as any who enjoy the innumerable Bleſſings of his auſpicious Reign, ſo it is not doubted but they will *then* manifeſt, as well as *at all other times they have cordially and conſtantly done*, the moſt laudable and becoming Zeal for the Maintenance and Support of them. And it is hoped the World will not impute it to them as a Crime, if *they think and judge that they can be more ſerviceable to them by maintaining their Liberties, than by ſelling or ſacrificing them to any Set of Men whatſoever.*

F I N I S.

A

COPY

OF A

LETTER

Sent from *Briſtol*, in Anſwer to one the COMMITTEE wrote thither laſt Year.

GENTLEMEN,

WE are favoured with your Letter of the 3d Inſtant, which brought us the Reſolution of the Aſſembly of Deputies at *Salters-Hall* on the 29th of *November* laſt, in relation to the Expediency of a preſent Attempt for repealing or explaining the Corporation and Teſt Acts.

You tell us we are indebted for this Favour to the Care of the Aſſembly for preſerving a good Underſtanding and Harmony amongſt the Diſſenters in general. We wiſh that Sentiment had prevail'd ſooner, for we have been informed that a Queſtion was moved in the Aſſembly of the 29th of *November*, which in our Apprehenſion had a moſt apparent Tendency to preſerve Union and Harmony between the Diſſenters of *London* and Parts adjacent, and thoſe of the moſt diſtant Parts

of the Kingdom: That Queſtion was oppoſed by ſome Gentlemen of the Committee. We need not be more particular. You know the Fate of that Queſtion, and from what Quarter the Oppoſition came. We wiſh the Proceedings of the Committee itſelf had not given Room for ſome Expoſtulations on a like Account.

But we impoſe Silence on our ſelves on that Head, and take this Opportunity to aſſure you, that as we concur in Opinion with you, that an Application to Parliament, *as things now ſtand*, from a ſingle Place, or from a few Places, unſupported by the Body of Diſſenters, or at leaſt a conſiderable Majority of them, may meet with a Reception diſhonourable to our common Intereſt, we for our ſelves reſolve to conduct our ſelves accordingly, and have communicated our Reſolution with our Advice to the ſame Effect to our Friends at *Liverpool*.

Not that we think an Application this Seſſion would have been at all improper, *if the Affair was now recent, and the Miſcarriages of a few Months paſt could be recalled.* But —— we remember we are complaining of the Miſtakes of our Friends, Friends united with us in the common Intereſt of Truth and Liberty, and therefore we will not enlarge on ſo diſagreeable a Subject.

We return you our hearty Thanks for the Aſſurances you give us that you will ever keep the Repeal in View, and careſully watch all favourable Opportunities for obtaining it: We for our Parts are determined to do the ſame; and if the Gentlemen in Power continue to entertain the ſame juſt Sentiments of it, as we have the Pleaſure to hear from you they now do, ſurely thoſe favourable Opportunities cannot be far off.

For

For if they think the Repeal will have a Tendency to ſecure Civil and Religious Liberty, and the Proteſtant Succeſſion in his Majeſty's Family, to ſtrengthen the Proteſtant Intereſt in general, and to reſcue a ſacred Ordinance from a ſhameful Proſtitution: They likewiſe will ever keep it in their View, and watch with us, and for us, all favourable Opportunities for bringing it about; and will not ſuffer themſelves to be directed by a groundleſs Apprehenſion of future Evils (the Suggeſtion frequently of Indolence and unmanly Fear) from purſuing a Point, which not only in its great and valuable Effects, but in the perſonal Glory that will attend their Succeſs in it, will ſo amply reward all the Pains they can take about it.

We are, &c.

637/5